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# Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007)

## I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 1770 (2007), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on a quarterly basis on the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the third submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on United Nations activities in Iraq since the last report (S/2008/19), dated 14 January 2008, with a continued focus on steps taken to implement resolution 1770 (2007). It presents a summary of key political developments during the period under review, including activities pertaining to resolution of disputed internal boundaries, as well as regional and international events concerning Iraq.

## II. Summary of key political and security developments in Iraq

3. Despite some improvements in the security situation, the Government of Iraq continues to face formidable challenges to reaching a national consensus on how to share power and resources; however, efforts were made at reconciliation through legislation. On 12 January 2008 the Justice and Accountability Law was adopted by the Council of Representatives, replacing earlier debaathification policies. On 13 February the Council of Representatives passed a package of laws: the Law on Governorates not Organized into a Region, the General Amnesty Law and the 2008 Budget. This package represented a compromise between the interests of three parliamentary blocks: the Kurdistan Alliance, the United Iraqi Alliance, and Tawafuq. Efforts to persuade Tawafuq to rejoin the Cabinet are continuing as part of a wider attempt to restructure the Government.

4. The growing Sahwa movement, composed of local alliances of tribal sheikhs that have been instrumental in providing neighbourhood-level security in Anbar province and other formerly restive areas, established the "Awakening Conference" at a meeting in Ramadi on 13 February, publicly announcing its transformation from a tribal grouping to a political bloc with aspirations for participating in Governorate Councils and the next general legislative elections. Despite their relative success and growing numbers, Sahwa Council forces, which currently number over 90,000 nationwide, temporarily withdrew their support of the multinational force in

Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces in Diyala and Babil. Fraying relations between the Government of Iraq and tribal elements in Anbar province caused a spike in violence in this area. Tensions were also reported between the Sahwas and the Iraqi Islamic Party. Slightly more than 10,000 Sahwas have now been transferred into the regular security forces.

5. On 17 February the five-month-old stabilization pact between the Sadrist Movement and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq expired, and on 22 February, Moqtada al-Sadr extended the freeze on military activities by the Mahdi Army. The Prime Minister's Office, the multinational force in Iraq and UNAMI publicly welcomed the announcement as a boost to security and national unity in Iraq. However, on 24 March the Government announced an operation to pursue criminal elements in Basra. This led to six days of intense fighting between the Government and armed groups, including the elements of the Mahdi Army, in many parts of the country until agreement was reached to stop the violence, by which time, according to several sources, over 700 people had been killed. The security situation in Basra and Baghdad had eased since this agreement. Military and police are continuing operations to seize militia assets in both cities and the resistance from militias has been minimal and short-lived. On 5 April, the Iraqi President, Prime Minister and the heads of political blocs in Parliament issued a 15-point statement calling on all parties and political blocs to dissolve their militias immediately and hand in their weapons. The statement did not mention any militias by name.

6. Security arrangements by the Government of Iraq supported by the multinational force are believed to have prevented mass casualty attacks during Ashura and Arba'in festivities in Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf. There was a decrease in violent incidents compared to previous years and an apparent increase in the public turnout. According to the provincial governor, 2 million visitors gathered in Karbala alone.

**Regional developments pertaining to Iraq**

7. The Government of Iraq continued to strengthen ties with neighbouring countries. For the first time in the modern political history of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, visited Baghdad on 2 and 3 March 2008. He met with the President, Jalal Talabani, the Prime Minister, Nuri Kamel al-Maliki, and others, primarily to discuss economic and development cooperation.

8. On 7 March, President Talabani was the first democratically elected Iraqi Head of State to visit Turkey. The two-day visit focused on closer economic cooperation and efforts to confront Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) elements. Days earlier, Turkish armed forces had withdrawn from northern Iraqi territory after a week-long cross-border ground operation against PKK armed elements based inside Iraqi territory.

9. On 28 February, a delegation from the League of Arab States concluded a three-day visit to Baghdad to discuss national reconciliation with Iraqi officials as well as political and tribal leaders. Efforts to encourage the Governments of Arab States to open embassies in Iraq continued, and on 11 and 12 March, Iraq hosted the 13th Meeting of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Arbil. On 24 March, Bahrain announced its decision to reopen its embassy in Iraq and appoint an ambassador. Preliminary assessments between the Government of Iraq and other

Arab States on their representation in Baghdad are reportedly under way. On 30 March, Iraq participated in the Arab League Summit in Damascus. The Government of Iraq reportedly expressed its reservations with certain sections of the final communiqué related to Iraq.

10. On 20 January 2008, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Hoshyar Zebari, publicly emphasized the importance of holding expanded meetings with neighbouring countries at the ministerial level and the affiliated working groups. In his view, the regional mechanism has proved to be effective for the situation in Iraq. On 2 and 3 March, a second round of meetings on regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours got under way with a meeting of the Working Group on Energy in Istanbul. On 18 March the Working Group on Refugees met in Amman, co-chaired by Jordan and Iraq. The Syrian Arab Republic hosted a meeting of the Working Group on Security and Border Control on 13 April in Damascus. Participation in the meetings was more inclusive in terms of regional representation than in previous ones.

11. Efforts to organize a fourth round of direct talks on Iraqi security issues between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran at the technical level remained unfulfilled. The Iraqi Government announced in March that in the future it would take responsibility for setting the dates for such meetings to avoid delays.

## III. Activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

### Political activities

12. My Special Representative and other senior UNAMI officials have continued to engage with a wide range of Iraqi political figures, both in Government and in Parliament, as well as diplomatic and military officials based in Baghdad, on various aspects of the UNAMI expanded mandate. He also explored ways to further the prospects for national reconciliation and political dialogue.

13. On 5 March 2008, my Special Representative travelled to Turkey for discussions with senior officials at the Foreign Ministry. Their talks covered the role of the United Nations in facilitating national reconciliation and regional dialogue, including in the context of northern Iraq.

14. On 11 March my Special Representative visited Najaf and held extensive meetings with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Grand Ayatollah al-Hakim, Ayatollah Muhammad al-Yacoubi, the Governor of Najaf and other religious leaders and political figures, including representatives of the Sadrist Trend. The meetings focused on provincial elections, national reconciliation, government performance and the need to provide assistance to Iraq's vulnerable communities, especially internally displaced persons. UNAMI intends to carry out more frequent visits to Najaf to maintain close contacts with key interlocutors.

15. My Special Representative chaired the first comprehensive anti-corruption conference for Iraq on 17 and 18 March 2008. He also attended a Government of Iraq national political reconciliation conference in Baghdad on 18 March 2008. Despite an initial desire to participate, the Sadrist Trend and Tawafuq decided to boycott the conference to signal their dissatisfaction with how negotiations for their return to the Iraqi cabinet were proceeding.

16. As part of its programme to expand United Nations outreach throughout the country, UNAMI has started deploying national Governorate Liaison Officers to each governorate of Iraq to help the Mission better understand the political, economic, social and security conditions in all areas of Iraq by liaising with local authorities and political parties and providing feedback to UNAMI. Moreover, this process would assist in designing programmatic responses that are most suited to particular Iraqi governorates. In March, UNAMI deployed its first nine Governorate Liaison Officers in Muthanna, Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Hilla, Nasariyah, Salahaddin and Wassit governorates. It is currently in the process of selecting candidates from the remaining governorates.

17. During the reporting period, UNAMI hosted several high-level visitors: David Veness, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security; António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Antonio Maria Costa, Director-General of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and Jan Mattson, Executive Director of UNOPS. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, visited the UNAMI office in Amman. Mr. Veness' visit was aimed at reviewing operating assumptions and updating security arrangements to enable the Mission to operate more effectively in the light of its expanded mandate. During Mr. Guterres' visit, he highlighted the need for implementing a joint assessment of the conditions for the return of internally displaced persons and decided to transfer the UNHCR Country Representative from Amman to Baghdad, along with key functions and other officials. Mr. Costa also committed to a presence of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Baghdad in the context of the United Nations system support to strengthen those Iraqi institutions which play a critical role in securing transparency and efficiency in implementing the Compact. The visit of Mr. Holmes to Amman was aimed at raising awareness of the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the need for additional assistance for Iraqi refugees and the increasing number of internally displaced persons.

**Disputed internal boundaries**

18. Pursuant to its mandate under paragraph 2 of resolution 1770 (2007) to help resolve disputed internal boundaries, UNAMI has prioritized activity on this issue, especially in northern Iraq. The Mission has sought to take advantage of the agreed six-month delay in implementing article 140 of the Constitution after its expiry on 31 December 2007 by facilitating dialogue on relatively non-contentious areas to begin with in order to build confidence and momentum among the parties, and to identify principles that could be used as part of a common approach to tackle the more disputed territories, including the city of Kirkuk.

19. In January 2008 UNAMI put together a dedicated team of political, electoral, human rights and constitutional officers to consider the multiple dimensions of this complex and sensitive issue. The team has systematically compiled source material, liaised with the Article 140 Committee and closely analysed its recommendations, and conducted interviews with Iraqi interlocutors across the political and ethnic spectrum. Since January 2008, a series of field visits have been carried out by UNAMI to establish contacts with local stakeholders and gather detailed district-level information in Kirkuk, Mosul, Tikrit and Arbil.

20. Mission efforts have focused on a number of initial areas that may offer the possibility for an early resolution by the Iraqi authorities. In early April my Special

Representative and senior UNAMI officials led teams to these locations in order to hear the views of local leaders on the ground and consult with them on confidence-building measures that could be taken by the respective communities. Based on these visits, UNAMI will provide technical assistance and recommendations to the Iraqi authorities involved in the decision-making process.

**Regional dialogue**

21. UNAMI participated as an observer in the meetings of the three technical working groups, held in Istanbul, Amman and Damascus, and pertaining to regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours in March and April. The Mission also attended several preparatory meetings in Baghdad and Amman with Iraqi diplomatic counterparts and experts.

22. In mid-March UNAMI organized a five-day training session for eight staff working for the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and assigned to a dedicated support unit tasked with assisting the preparation and follow-up of regional meetings at the working and ministerial levels. The first tangible contributions are expected in terms of practical support and the development of an agenda for the next expanded meeting of Iraqi neighbours in Kuwait on 22 April 2008. Through a senior Special Adviser in UNAMI, the Mission is working to enhance the quality of diplomatic liaisons between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and stakeholders, and is helping to develop strategic options for expanding cooperation with Iraq's neighbours. This includes working closely with United Nations Resident Coordinators from several neighbouring States to better coordinate and plan United Nations support to the regional dialogue process.

**Electoral activities**

23. UNAMI continues to work closely with the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq to ensure that it attains a state of readiness to conduct future election events that are seen as credible and accepted by the Iraqi people. Possible election activities in 2008 could include a nationwide voter registration update exercise, referendum on the formation of regions, a referendum on a new constitution and governorate elections.

24. UNAMI has enhanced its efforts to support the Commission in preparations for a voter registration update exercise scheduled to take place in June. Critical elements in this regard were the development of a comprehensive budget and the finalization of a provisional voter list based on the public distribution system database. UNAMI helped to design a selection process involving 130,000 individual applications for 6,500 voter registration staff, who have yet to be trained and deployed. My Special Representative visited the Commission in late March 2008 to familiarize himself with the selection process of the staff for some 550 voter registration centres located in all Iraq governorates.

25. On 14 February 2008, my Special Representative announced at a press conference with top leaders of the Council of Representatives in Baghdad that UNAMI would assist with a professional and transparent selection process for the directors of eight governorate electoral offices where there had been no consensus among the political parties on possible candidates. An application drive was launched the same day on Iraqi radio and in all leading newspapers. Pre-screened

candidates were submitted by my Special Representative to the Council of Representatives in a subsequent press conference on 2 April.

26. Priority was given to developing vital electoral legislation. UNAMI has provided assistance to both the election commission and the Government of Iraq on developing a new election system to better reflect the wishes of the Iraqi people and better accommodate women, internally displaced persons and minority groups. The Government of Iraq drafting has so far limited internally displaced person voting to places of origin. Discussions and working sessions with all political blocs and special interest groups consumed much of the Mission's activities in March and are planned throughout April, as UNAMI tries to forge political consensus on key elements of a law.

27. Critical political decisions will have to be made if scheduled election activities are to be completed in 2008. The Commission must receive a budget immediately, and a political agreement on the terms of voter eligibility (particularly those relating to internally displaced persons) must be reached in the coming weeks if a 30-day voter registration update exercise is to begin in June. In addition, a governorate election law must be written and adopted by the Council of Representatives in May if Governorate Council elections are to take place in 2008. Given that there is little flexibility in the operational timeline, if these political actions are not taken as scheduled, that may hinder the Commission from conducting governorate elections later this year.

**Constitutional support activities**

28. The Council of Representatives has extended the mandate of the Constitutional Review Committee until the end of the current legislative term in June 2008. On 5 April, the Political Council for National Security called for expediting the process of constitutional amendments. The Committee has indicated that it plans to refer issues upon which it is unable to reach consensus to the Presidency Council, the Prime Minister and his deputies, and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and his deputies. The UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support will continue to provide advice and assistance to the Constitutional Review Committee as it seeks to finalize its proposals.

29. During the reporting period, the UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support provided advice and assistance to the Council of Representatives on constitutionally mandated legislation, particularly on the Law on Governorates not Organized into Regions (Provincial Powers Law). This included responding to a request by Deputy Speaker Sheikh Khaled al-Attiya to provide a technical brief on the scope and application of the principle of administrative decentralization as it relates to Iraq's governorates. UNAMI also continued its role as the co-chair of the international legislative round table, an informal mechanism developed jointly by the Office of Constitutional Support, the European Commission, the United Kingdom Embassy and the United States Embassy aimed at coordinating international community efforts to facilitate assistance to the Iraqi Government on Council of Representatives legislation. Round-table discussions during the reported period were held on disputed internal boundaries, the Provincial Powers Law and the legal framework for upcoming provincial elections.

30. On 8 March 2008, UNAMI and the United Nations Office for Project Services completed a one-week study tour to Northern Ireland for members of the

Constitutional Review Committee and other parliamentarians covering the full range of Iraq's political blocs. Funding was provided by the European Union. The study tour gave Iraqi parliamentarians the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with counterparts who had participated in the Northern Ireland peace process and to explore how power-sharing can be part of an institutional framework to support the political settlement of sectarian conflict. UNAMI plans to provide its good offices to bring this experience to bear in future multi-party dialogues on divisive constitutional issues in Iraq.

**Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development**

31. The Iraq 2008 consolidated appeal was launched on 12 February in Baghdad and was also presented to the Kurdistan regional government Council of Ministers in Arbil on 13 February. The consolidated appeal process includes appeals from 14 United Nations agencies and 10 non-governmental organizations for $265 million in support of targeted relief operations to deliver emergency aid in the areas of health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation, housing and shelter, food, and protection. By the end of the first quarter of 2008, $43 million (16 per cent) of the consolidated appeal process has been funded and an additional $62 million has been pledged.

32. The United Nations country team policy group in Baghdad, consisting of senior United Nations staff representing various sectors, has been providing direct technical assistance to the Government and is working to support the development of realistic budgets and the timely disbursement of funds. Advice is also being provided at the request of the Government on the drafting of a more operational National Development Strategy, linked to the national budget, with greater emphasis on decentralization.

33. The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General is reviewing the governance and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the Iraq Trust Fund. In parallel, an in-depth review of projects under implementation has resulted in updated data on the status of the United Nations Development Group activities in Iraq funded by the Iraq Trust Fund. The review process will lead to renewed programming efforts by the United Nations system in support of the International Compact and National Development Strategy of Iraq. I am grateful for the support of many donors for United Nations-organized efforts in Iraq, in particular the European Union and Japan.

34. The spiral of violence in southern Iraqi towns and cities, as well as in areas in Baghdad, dominated by Shia which took place in late March 2008, reportedly led to the death of over 700 people and 1,500 injured, many of them civilians. In response to the outbreak of violence, the UNAMI Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Humanitarian Coordinator visited Basra from 31 March to 3 April together with a government delegation to assess the situation and delivery of humanitarian assistance. They also concluded that although not a humanitarian crisis, the conflict prevented people from accessing water, medical supplies and food.

35. The Humanitarian Coordinator and the government delegation worked on an action and contingency plan to install early warning measures for the future and mitigate deprivation in view of the long-term neglect of the region. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and MercyCorps distributed tankered water in

Basra and Sadr city. UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross delivered surgical and medical supplies in the conflict-affected areas. The International Organization for Migration, UNHCR and MercyCorps delivered food and non-food items in Basra and other locations.

36. UNAMI continued to advocate for and work with the Office of the Prime Minister on the establishment of a permanent unit responsible for supporting the Government in times of humanitarian crisis. The recent humanitarian response to Basra and Baghdad was coordinated by an ad hoc committee on the instruction of the Deputy Prime Minister.

37. UNICEF continued to deliver humanitarian assistance in the wake of attacks in Mosul and Karbala, which have caused numerous casualties dispatching emergency medical supplies for 500 people and supporting school recovery. Humanitarian water-tankering operations continued to reach 125,000 people during the crisis, mostly in Baghdad. UNICEF also distributed 745 emergency Early Childhood Development kits to kindergartens and nurseries in 15 governorates to help young children cope with psychosocial distress. UNICEF continued its advocacy efforts on behalf of detained children at Camp Cropper and other facilities and co-hosted a second high-level consultation on justice for children in the country.

38. An agreement between the Government of Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was signed for a $17.6 million project to establish a dedicated maternity and children's hospital in the city of Fallujah in Anbar Governorate. This 24-month project seeks to rehabilitate and convert the present general hospital in Fallujah into a specialized maternity and children's hospital, since the existing general hospital is relocating to new premises.

39. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in containing a measles outbreak in Anbar. The 10-day immunization drive, executed through house-to-house visits, started on 9 March and reached 198,075 (96 per cent) children from 9 to 59 months of age, of the total target of 206,549. Activities in prevention of Avian Influenza continued nationwide.

40. A joint assessment of the conditions for the return of internally displaced persons to some areas throughout Iraq is being carried out by the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and UNHCR, together with the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation and the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology and supported by UNAMI, the International Organization for Migration, the International Medical Corps and the United States Agency for International Development/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance/United States. Physical, legal and material safety will be assessed, as well as the socio-economic conditions of internally displaced persons. The assessment is due to start in March and will run through the end of June 2008.

41. On 17 and 18 March in Baghdad, in collaboration with the Iraqi Government and key Iraqi anti-corruption agencies, UNDP with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNAMI organized a high-level conference entitled "International Compact with Iraq: Initiative on Good Governance and Anti-Corruption — Conference on the United Nations Convention against Corruption". The purpose was to identify the challenges facing Iraqi society in advancing public accountability and ethics, to articulate measures in relation to the

United Nations Convention against Corruption and to develop outreach initiatives that can assist in making public institutions more transparent and accountable.

42. The UNAMI/UNOPS non-governmental organization law round table funded by the European Union was held in Arbil on 1 and 2 March. The event was successful, with significant agreement between key Iraqi policymakers and representatives of civil society on the non-governmental organization law. Most non-governmental organization representatives felt their concerns on the independence of their work and activities were contained in the unanimously agreed Declaration of Shared Principles and Recommendations.

43. To commemorate International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 4 April, my Special Representative addressed a Government of Iraq event supported by UNDP, at which he stressed the challenges facing Iraq after its signing of the Ottawa Convention in the light of the fact that its territory contains possibly the world's largest number of landmines and unexploded ordnance. UNDP provides technical support to the Ministry of the Environment, which is responsible for mine clearance.

44. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme completed the rehabilitation of two schools in Missan, while work is ongoing in 12 schools in Missan, Samawa, Najaf, Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk. The first phase of a feasibility study on addressing local-level constraints to housing supply in six cities was completed. Arrangements have been finalized to deliver, on a pilot basis, in-country training of contractors and unemployed youth in construction trade practices. A joint programme review with the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan regional government partner ministries was also carried out. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations conducted an assessment of the date and palm sector. The sample data was large, covering 5,000 farms. Rehabilitation of the seed sector was ongoing, with equipment being procured and placed in Iraq. Building plans for fish hatcheries were drawn up.

45. The Government of Iraq has made it known to UNAMI that the conditions for traditional approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are not ripe. However, the Government has requested the United Nations to provide expertise, financial support and advocacy services. In response, UNOPS will field an Advisory Team which will operate within the three pillars (Reintegration, Communications and Coordination) of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration Unit of the Government of Iraq.

46. In February, the Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit was established within the Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, bringing together analysts from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations and linking closely with the information management capacities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Its overall aim is to examine trends and developments at both the national and local levels that could improve policy, programming, advocacy, and coordination of the international response through the more strategic use of information. The Unit has begun by consolidating existing indicators and information within one repository, which is available on the Unit's website.

47. It has been one year since the launch of the International Compact with Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 3 May 2007, as an initiative of the Government of Iraq

to forge a new partnership with the international community. The Government of Iraq and the United Nations, as co-chairs of the Compact, have invited Member States to attend the Iraq Compact Annual Revue Conference, which will take place on 29 May in Stockholm. The Conference will provide an opportunity for the participants to review the progress made in achieving the objectives of the International Compact and to discuss further steps towards fulfilling these goals. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the Government of Sweden for agreeing to host this important event.

48. As of 31 March 2008, the total contributions to the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, one of the two funds of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, equalled $1.33 billion. A total of 141 projects and joint programme projects valued at $1.11 billion were approved as of 31 March 2008 for funding under the Trust Fund. Continuing the significant progress in implementation, commitments worth cumulatively $840 million (76 per cent of approved funding) have been entered into and $727 million (65 per cent of approved funding) have been disbursed as of the end of February. Monthly financial updates are made available on the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq website (www.irffi.org). Contributions in the first quarter to the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund included: $27,795,000 from the European Union, and $1,466,000 from the Government of Finland.

**Human rights activities**

49. On 15 March 2008 UNAMI launched its twelfth human rights report, covering the period from July to December 2007. The report acknowledges the substantive comments on the draft report received from the Kurdistan regional government authorities and the multinational force in Iraq. The report addressed serious human rights concerns with respect to the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan regional government and the multinational force in Iraq and included recommendations aimed at introducing improvements in the human rights situation. UNAMI also welcomed the decision of the Government of Iraq to ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture, as well as its invitation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to visit Iraq. Preparations by government officials for a visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture are also under way. The decision by the Government to allow public reporting on its human rights activities was another positive development.

50. Despite improvements in the general security situation, towards the end of 2007 suicide bombings, car bombs and other attacks continued with devastating consequences for civilians. The reduction in security incidents in Baghdad and other locations was also accompanied by a deterioration of the security situation elsewhere, including Mosul and Diyala. Religious and ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups were victims of violent attacks, as were women in so-called "honour crimes". Armed groups also carried out assassinations of government or state officials, religious figures, professional groups and law enforcement personnel. There were also numerous incidents involving intimidation, abduction, torture and extrajudicial killings.

51. A number of measures have been taken by the executive and judicial authorities to improve the handling of detainees, including efforts to ensure more effective judicial oversight and to alleviate overcrowding. In this context, the

UNAMI Human Rights Office continued to visit detention facilities and prisons at the invitation of the relevant authorities in Baghdad and Arbil. It documented cases involving the denial of due process, including the deprivation of access to defence counsel and prolonged pre-trial detention, as well as instances of the torture and ill-treatment of detainees, including juveniles. UNAMI also maintained its monitoring activities of investigations and trials before the Central Criminal Court of Iraq, and recently introduced similar monitoring of proceedings before the criminal courts in the Kurdistan regional government. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, incidents involving violence against women remained one of the priority concerns, although the Kurdistan regional government has initiated protection procedures for women and continued to work closely with UNAMI to improve the human rights situation in the region.

52. UNAMI welcomed the introduction of measures by the multinational force designed to improve the handling of detainee cases by expediting reviews and decisions on releases, as well as the launching of a major rehabilitation programme for adult and juvenile detainees. UNAMI remains in discussion with the multinational force on granting access to multinational force detention facilities to independent human rights monitors engaged in public reporting, including UNAMI.

53. UNAMI cooperated with the legislative authorities in both Baghdad and Arbil on several pieces of draft legislation affecting the situation of women, the freedom of expression and the establishment of a national human rights commission. The UNAMI programme of capacity-building and training activities remains active, aimed at assisting the Iraqi authorities in fulfilling their human rights obligations and strengthening civil society organizations engaged in human rights protection. With the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNOPS, UNAMI is hosting a training seminar for Iraqi lawyers working with non-governmental organizations that provide legal aid to detainees across Iraq.

54. In March, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General opened a conference organized by UNAMI in Baghdad on the protection of human rights in the context of counter-terrorism measures, with the participation of the Ministers of Human Rights and Interior. The seminar was attended by some 80 Iraqi officials and others involved in crafting and implementing policies to combat terrorism and in adjudicating terrorism-related cases. Experts from the United Kingdom police and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime led discussions on current counter-terrorism practices and legislation, best practices in combating terrorism while protecting human rights, the ratification by Iraq of relevant international treaties and protocols, amendments to Iraqi anti-terrorism legislation and the provision of support and capacity-building activities by United Nations bodies.

### Operational, logistic and security issues

55. Following a period of improvements in security, the first quarter of 2008 witnessed a slow but steady increase in violent incidents from January to March. This was not a result of any one specific event, but rather due to the faltering of some key elements underlying security gains in late 2007 against a background of limited political progress. These trends are not irreversible but it will require significant political effort to press forward, given that military efforts alone have not achieved the desired results.

56. As noted in the last quarterly report in December 2007, tensions in the south have been simmering for many months. The various Shia militia factions routinely launch attacks against each other's interests and periodically engage in open conflict lasting several days, or even weeks, before Iraqi Security Forces and the multinational force in Iraq intervene. In February there were numerous public demonstrations against the political and security leadership in Basra. In late March the Government of Iraq launched a new offensive against criminal and militia elements in Basra, which sparked widespread fighting not only in that city but other southern cities and Baghdad as well. The Iraqi Security Forces have conducted operations targeting Jaysh al-Mahdi in Nassiriyah, al-Amarah, al-Kut and Hillah, thus escalating the level of violence in these cities. Najaf and Karbala also suffered explosive attacks in the last week of March, which is highly unusual for these two cities. The incidence of indirect fire attacks on Basra air station rose steadily throughout the quarter, with 48 attacks from January to March. This upward trend in indirect fire attacks is expected as long as factional fighting in Basra persists.

57. In Baghdad the year began on an optimistic note. Sectarian violence appeared much reduced and the number of high-profile attacks had dwindled to such an extent that weeks would go by without a single vehicle bomb or other form of mass casualty attack. However, incidents of roadside bomb attacks against Iraqi Security Forces and multinational forces in particular grew steadily throughout February. By March, the number of daily attacks involving explosive devices, including grenades, rose to averages of between 30 and 40. The security situation in Baghdad continues to limit the daily activities of UNAMI. The indirect fire attacks aimed at the International Zone throughout the quarter was minimal until the last week of March, when fighting between Iraqi Security Forces and Jaysh al-Mahdi in the south prompted a dramatic increase in indirect fire attacks against the military and government facilities in Baghdad, as well as the International Zone. Between 23 and 31 March, there were 47 separate indirect fire barrages consisting of 149 rounds of 122-mm and 107-mm rockets and at least three devastating 240-mm rockets. These attacks caused four deaths, injured another 15 people and inflicted significant damage to housing and office facilities in the International Zone. Among these casualties, one United Nations contractor was killed and two were injured from the direct impact of a 240-mm rocket at the United Nations accommodation camp later in March. By way of comparison, based on information from multiple sources, there were less than a dozen attacks on the International Zone in the six months prior to 23 March.

58. While the security situation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq has remained consistently stable, military operations in Mosul have forced hostile actors to relocate to the region leading to an unusual level of activity. For example, the Palace Hotel in Sulaymaniyah was attacked by a vehicle bomb on 10 March, the first in the province in over a year. The driver of the vehicle and one hotel security guard were killed; of the 32 injured, most had superficial wounds. The Kurdish security authorities were able to effectively manage the situation. In addition, they also uncovered a further two vehicle bomb devices in the region during the first quarter of this year.

59. Nationally, the average number of recorded incidents of violence has slowly climbed during this reporting period. From highs of over 200 per day last summer, the figure had dropped to averages below 80 during the last quarter of 2007. That figure now averages around 130, without calculating the hundreds of exchanges of

fire that have occurred in the south during the last week of March. More disturbing is the renewed propensity for mass-casualty attacks using suicide vests and vehicle bombs, particularly in Baghdad. This trend is believed to be the result of re-engagement by specialized insurgent groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq, who claim affiliation with Al-Qaida in Iraq.

60. During the past year, UNAMI has made progress in increasing its self-reliance. However, the Mission still depends on Member States for security, logistical, operational and financial support. I am grateful to those Member States that have provided such support in the past and I hope it will continue. In particular, I would like to urge Member States to consider a request to provide additional military advisers to UNAMI, who are essential for the planned expansion of the UNAMI presence and activities beyond its current locations in Iraq.

61. I would also like to thank Member States that have provided financial support to the "distinct entity" which operates under the command of the multinational force and has a dedicated mission to provide security for UNAMI. Thanks to contributions received in late 2007, there are sufficient funds to cover the distinct entity until August 2008. I appeal to Member States that have either contributed in the past, or have not done so already, to consider making additional contributions in 2008 to ensure that the trust fund for the distinct entity is well resourced for at least the remainder of the year.

62. The enhancement of side protection and the repair of the older overhead protection at the UNAMI interim accommodation facility is 90 per cent completed and the construction of additional office space is ongoing. In Arbil there are ongoing projects for the construction of hard-structure accommodation for international staff accommodation, as well as office and medical buildings. Plans are ongoing for additional staff accommodation in view of an expected increase in staff ceiling later in 2008. While undertaking all available steps to increase self-reliance in Iraq, UNAMI intends to continue employing support services under the Logistics Civilian Augmentation Programme and the related 607 Agreement in cases where there is no equivalent service provider.

63. In January UNAMI identified a future site for the United Nations Integrated Compound as an alternative to a site previously chosen. This will provide major savings for the Organization as well as enhanced security. A detailed draft proposal for the United Nations Integrated Compound in Baghdad has been sent to the Office of the Controller and is to be considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in early May.

64. Steps are being taken to obtain a dedicated commercial aircraft for UNAMI. The United Nations Procurement Division has completed a competitive solicitation, which is now making its way through the regular United Nations procurement process. It is hoped that in the coming weeks the United Nations will be able to identify a commercial air carrier able to provide an aircraft fitted with the necessary equipment to operate in Iraq. This will go a long way towards helping the Mission to overcome a long-standing operational obstacle.

# IV. Observations

65. While some initial steps towards national reconciliation in Iraq have begun, more needs to be done to help Iraqi communities resolve fundamental issues that divide them. Once again I urge influential figures and political parties to publicly reinforce the need for — and to personally work towards — political dialogue, compromise and recognition that Iraq's future depends on its leaders pursuing the Iraqi national interest, rather than individual, party, ethnic or sectarian interests.

66. It is a matter of deep concern that in a country with such vast potential wealth from natural resources, large sections of the population are living in poverty and insecurity. In this regard, I believe that agreement on a hydrocarbon law which enables the sharing of the country's natural resources in a fair and transparent manner could be enormously beneficial, and I call on Iraq's political leadership and Parliament to work together in the country's interest and pass such a law. However, to maximize the reconciliation potential of this law, it will almost certainly need to be accompanied — or swiftly followed — by a broader national compact on power-sharing in the country. The decision of the Constitutional Review Committee to redouble its efforts offers an important opportunity to resolve long-standing disputes between Iraqi communities.

67. I believe that the holding of credible governorate elections later this year, as mandated by recent legislation, could in the long run serve to underpin the legitimacy of democratic governance. In order to ensure that credible electoral events are held on time in 2008, it is essential that Iraqi leaders meet a number of prerequisites. In this regard, I call on Iraq's Council of Representatives to urgently pass a governorate elections law, and urge the Government of Iraq to provide all material assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission in order to conduct these elections as smoothly, transparently and fairly as possible. I also call upon Iraq's political blocs to respect, and to do their utmost to protect, the independence of Independent High Electoral Commission from political interference so that election results can be credible and broadly accepted.

68. The United Nations welcomed the extension of the freeze on military activities of the Mahdi Army, announced by Moqtada al-Sadr on 22 February 2008, as a positive step. Similarly, the end of the fighting in Basra and other places at the end of March was made possible by compromise and agreement. I urge all concerned to do everything possible to maintain the current decrease in violent conflict and to avoid any provocative acts that could serve to undermine it.

69. The issue of disputed internal boundaries continues to be of high importance, both in terms of conflict prevention in northern Iraq and in the context of wider national reconciliation among the country's communities. UNAMI has prioritized this question during the reporting period and I commend Iraq's political leadership for continuing to pursue a solution to this issue via political means. I urge the concerned Iraqi communities to move rapidly to engage in a process of dialogue and agree on basic principles for resolution on less contentious disputed territories first, and more difficult ones in the coming months. While the onus of resolving disputed territories clearly remains with Iraqi leaders, support from the international community will be vital to encourage Iraqi leaders to make real and mutually acceptable compromises. I call upon key Member States to assist in this effort.

70. I encourage Member States to build on the strong international support shown to the recent consolidated appeal for $265 million in support of targeted relief operations. This appeal includes a $20 million Expanded Humanitarian Response

Fund, which will provide the country team with modest flexible funds to ensure a timely response to humanitarian crises. I also encourage the Government of Iraq to strengthen its response to the needs of the most vulnerable populations both inside and outside Iraq. I am pleased that the Government of Iraq, supported by the United Nations, the United Kingdom Department for International Development and USAID, proved itself capable of assuming its responsibilities in taking the lead and mobilizing resources to support those affected by the recent clashes in Basra and Baghdad. However, the United Nations and Member States should not give up their efforts to bolster the central Government's emergency response capacity with a small, dedicated support office to the Prime Minister's emergency focal point.

71. The regional dialogue process is an essential part of efforts by the international community to restore stability and security in Iraq. I urge Member States to seize the opportunity presented by the third expanded meeting of foreign ministers of neighbouring States of Iraq in Kuwait on 22 April 2008 to lend ready support to the regional dialogue process. It is no less important for Iraq to articulate clearly what direction it would like regional cooperation to take. The Conference could give an important impulse for reinvigorating the regional working group meetings, whose potential for coordinated work in joint technical projects has not been fully utilized. It is important for Iraq and its neighbours to focus their efforts on achieving more tangible outcomes at these meetings and ensure proper follow-up.

72. I welcome the positive step taken by Bahrain to commit to reopening an embassy in Baghdad and I look forward to other Arab States among Iraq's neighbours following suit. In this regard, I would also welcome further steps by the Government of Iraq to encourage this development. I would also urge Iraq's neighbours to do their utmost to strengthen border security by doing more to prevent fighters from crossing into Iraq and closing off the supply of weapons, money and training to armed groups that are destabilizing the country.

73. I was concerned by reports indicating that the parties involved in the recent fighting in Basra and other places had committed human rights abuses. I urge those involved to respect their legal obligations under international humanitarian law, which applies both to States and to non-State actors, to minimize harm to civilians. Every effort should be made to avoid excessive or indiscriminate force. Under no circumstances should civilians be used intentionally as human shields in order to deter attacks from enemy combatants, and all captured combatants should be treated in accordance with the laws of war. All those involved should do their utmost to address the humanitarian consequences of the recent fighting, provide access to humanitarian workers, and facilitate the delivery of crucial supplies of medicines, foodstuffs, drinking water, fuel and other critical items to hospitals and the civilian population.

74. I am pleased to note that UNAMI, with full support from Headquarters, has continued to move forward in expanding its activities in line with its mandate as revised in Security Council resolution 1770 (2007). It has shown creativity and determination in its efforts to find new ways to support the people and Government of Iraq. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Special Representative for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, for his steadfast leadership and strong commitment in meeting the United Nations mandate in Iraq. I would also like to thank the UNAMI national and international staff, as well as the personnel of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, for their tireless efforts under very challenging conditions.